Romans 5:6+8 For at the appointed time, while we were still helpless, Christ died for the ungodly…But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

When was the last time you felt utterly helpless? I have never experienced this so far in my life, but I am told that people who are caught in severe storms, like a tornado or hurricane or severe flooding can speak to you about that feeling of utter helplessness. Because as I heard it described: “When you see that tornado coming and you know everything you have is going to be destroyed, you go down to your shelter, knowing there is nothing, absolutely nothing you can do to stop it and even at that, your prayers are just that you manage to stay alive, because at this point you aren’t even sure your shelter will protect you!” I think those words do describe “helplessness.”

Now, I will be honest with you. I don’t think we like, in any form or fashion, this feeling or idea of helplessness. As humans we usually work hard to instill in our children and selves the idea that “we can overcome, we can do whatever we wish to accomplish.” We have developed sayings like: “If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again!” How about this one, “Keep your nose to the grindstone.” Or, “The show must go on.” Or when I was a kid I remember being taught stories like “The Little Train that Could.”

And if you pay attention you would recognize that most hero movies are all about how the hero faces one problem after another and by luck or chance just keeps on winning. I always got a big chuckle out of the disaster movies where it was proclaimed that it’s the end of the world and yet the hero manages to rescue people and save the world. I chuckle at such movies because I can tell you this, when God brings about an end to this world, when the Day of Judgement comes, there is no escape, there is no place to go where you can escape what God has brought about.

Nope, we don’t like feelings of or the reality of helplessness in our lives. And in many ways that is one of our deepest religious problems. We have been instilled with the idea that we can overcome and for the most part I believe that is a good attitude to have but not when it comes to religion. Because in religion the idea that you can overcome, you can win leads to that falsehood of “work righteousness.” That somehow we, WE are going to be so stellar, so wonderful, so upright that God will just have to stand back and let us into heaven. Please note, that such an attitude and spirit is exactly what is behind every religion that is not the Christian faith. Because if you are not following the true Christian faith, then I can guarantee that you are involved in a work righteous religion, and without any doubt a “false religion.”

That doesn’t mean we are hopeless. In fact, if you want the wonder and joy of salvation, the hope of eternal life and salvation, the marvel of knowing that you are a part of God’s family, children of eternal life then the Christian faith is the only way to go. Because it is the only sure and absolute faith out there. I tell you that because of what our text says to us today. It is a text that lays out the horrid truth of our helplessness and yet directs us to the wonderful reality of complete reconciliation with God. Our theme will be: **CHRIST DIED FOR US.**

Now, let’s lay forth the reality that God presents us with in this particular text. Did you pay attention to the various words connected to us as you heard this text? These words are not just God being negative or trying to suppress our spirit, these words are the truth and reality of our standing before God, a standing that has existed ever since the fall into sin. Because once that fall into sin took place, the very nature of mankind was changed. We went from beings “with the image of God” (that means Adam and Eve were holy and had a perfect knowledge of God) to beings lost in trespass and sin, enemies of God, no longer of the light but lost in the darkness. God reminds us of this truth in our verses when he describes us with words like: **“helpless, ungodly, sinners and enemies.”** Let’s review what God has revealed.

God says we are “helpless.” The original word is pretty forceful. It means, “weak, sick, delicate, powerless or helpless.” It is a word that says, “You can’t!” It is a word applied not to our physical being but rather to our spiritual condition. Before God we are powerless, helpless. Think of the new born infant. Our children at birth are the most helpless and powerless babies of the planet because if we do not take every step to foster the life of that child, that child will die and there is nothing that child can do about it. In the animal world, newborns are often required to stand, walk and seek out Mom’s milk. Human babies can’t even do that. Spiritually speaking, we are totally helpless before God, totally helpless when it comes to life.

Note that we are also called: **“ungodly.”** Take in the full scope of that word. We lack “godliness.” We lack good and right, true and sure, light and wisdom. Those qualities used to be ours before Adam and Eve sinned. But now our very nature is devoid, empty of even a shadow of God. Dear people, this is a word that reveals the darkness of our core and we don’t like it one bit.

Next we are told we are **“sinners.”** In confirmation class we learn the history of this word. It is really a Greek archery term. When you were shooting your bow and arrow the object was to hit the bullseye, the very heart of the target. But we “miss the mark!” Our shots are no good. I submit that in truth, our shots completely fly past anything we are aiming at. Such is the force of this word. God has set forth his standards, his lines are drawn, and his “this far and no more” barrier is erected and we don’t just lightly violate the line, we dive across and swim out as far as we can.

And then we are called **“enemies.”** No mistaking this word. We have a built in hostility toward God. We can pretend we are all good and loveable, conscientious of the Lord and his position but in truth, our nature is to be hostile, to attack, to be rid of this being as if He has no standing or right in our lives and world. Seriously, just look in our lifetimes how hard our world has worked to make sure God and his truths are eradicated and cast aside as folly and myth.

Devastating words, aren’t they? Yet these are words of truth, words of God laying forth our spiritual reality. And if we just stopped there, going no further in God’s truth we would be left in this state: helpless, lost in trespass, utterly and totally hopeless in the issues of life. But what a joy to be different. What a wonder to be impacted and affected by the grace and total love of God for our lives. Because, though God reveals this truth to us he also reveals how He has completely and totally saved us from our very own wretched selves.

Did you catch the words that revealed that wonder of God? Verse 6 says, **“While we were still helpless, Christ died for the ungodly.”** Verse 8 says, **“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”** And then, verses 9-11, **“Therefore, since we have now been justified by his blood, it is even more certain that we will be saved from God’s wrath through him. For if, while we were sinners, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, it is even more certain that, since we have been reconciled, we will be saved by his life. And not only is this so, but we also go on rejoicing confidently in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received this reconciliation.”**

What awesome and utter wonder is revealed in this words! And just as we highlighted the words of our sinful nature so let us highlight the words that turn it all completely around for us. Words like: **“love, justified, saved, and reconciled.”** These words too, are well worth contemplating for their wonder.

Note that are told we are **“loved.’** Despite our nature, God so loves us. Not the shallow, emotional, giddiness of some teenage crush, but the true and genuine, the solid and sure bent of God for us. Love. My favorite way to try and fully contemplate this word is to think of it as the word “commitment.” God is committed to us, totally and absolutely in every way. God will not quit us. God will not despair and finally abandon us. This word says that God will give his all for us. And in truth He has. At least four times in this little section we are reminded that Christ gave his life, shed his blood, and died just for us. Name one other god, any other God in this history of gods, where that God gave his all, even his very life for his created? I have asked before and I ask again, “Would you die for what is worthless?”

That question is actually brought about by verse 7. That verse makes reference to the fact that in our world, men from time to time have given their lives, but only for a cause or person they thought was of worth and importance. But what about dying for the worthless? Would you cast aside your life for an ant? You know, one of those tiny, pesky things that we tend to squash and destroy without even a thought? For a mosquito, a viper, a murder hornet? Choose that which is significantly below your worth and then ask if you would die for it? Jesus did. He died for us. He shed his blood to pay for our sins that we might be saved. And Jesus did this all for but one reason: love. He so loved us that He died for us.

We are told we are **“justified.”** A fantastic word of hope and wonder. This is a word that means “you are free from all charges, you are declared innocent of any sin.” Remember our nature. God despite that nature justifies. And make no mistake, the evidence, tons and tons of it, stands against us and makes it clear that we are as guilty and wicked as could be….Yet our Heavenly Father, because of what Jesus has done for us, sees us with the clothing of Christ’s righteousness. He does not see our faults and horror, but only the perfect holiness of his Son Jesus. That is the impact of faith. Declared innocent because of Jesus and his atonement for us.

There is more. We are **“saved.”** It is a word that says: rescue, deliver, keep safe, preserve, cure and make well. Yes, let the impact of that word sink in. We are rescued. The picture is that of the stranded and helpless who are plucked from disaster and certain death. The same with the word deliver. Then there is “keep safe and preserve.” When I contemplate the nuance of this bent of the word I like to think of “preserves” that we put up from our garden. We take the harvest that God has given and we take steps to keep it fresh and good, beneficial and usable. That’s what God does for us. He keeps us safe, he preserves our souls for his eternity of heaven. Or again contemplate that saved means to cure, make well. We have the most devastating of disease: sin. But God in Jesus has cured us, he has made us well all for the sake of Jesus.

Finally comes the word **“reconciled.”** The first sermon my classmates and I wrote was based on the text found in 2 Corinthians 5, those verses titled: “The ministry of reconciliation.” That word is burned into my very heart. We are reconciled. As we learned, “It is not that you have changed or the reality of our nature has changed, but God has changed our status. We were lost but now are found, we were dead and now made alive, we were blind and now we see, we were enemies of God and now we are his children. Not because we have done or accomplished anything but because God has reconciled us in Christ.” The easiest way to think of this word is again that picture of “You were his enemy and now God has made you his child and heir of eternal life.”

There you are. The wonder of God laid out in the words that he shares with us for our eternal good. And did you catch the other very important words, the wrap up words of this text? Twice we are told: **“it is even more certain.” “It is even more certain that we will be saved from God’s wrath…it is even more certain, that, since we have been reconciled, we will be saved by his life.”** What God has revealed here is not iffy, not some sort of dull dream we have trouble remembering or some sort of dim, almost imagined light at the end of the tunnel. These things have the sureness of God. They are founded on God’s power, love, grace, mercy and care just for us. These things are certain!

And just as important are these words here: **“And not only is this so, but we also go on rejoicing confidently in God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”** All doubt is cast aside. There is no room for even one shred of doubt. In Jesus we rejoice confidently. God has saved us, we are his. This is our Christian faith. Amen.